

The Power of Resiliency: Successfully Negotiate Life's Twists and Turns

HOW RESILIENT ARE YOU? Developed by Al Siebert, PhD.

Rate yourself from 1 to 5 on the following: (1 = very little, 5 = very strong)

- _____ In a crisis or chaotic situation, I calm myself and focus on taking useful actions.
- _____ I'm usually optimistic. I see difficulties as temporary and expect to overcome them.
- _____ I can tolerate high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty about situations.
- _____ I adapt quickly to new developments. I'm good at bouncing back from difficulties.
- _____ I'm playful. I find the humor in rough situations, and can laugh at myself.
- _____ I'm able to recover emotionally from losses and setbacks. I have friends I can talk with. I can express my feelings to others and ask for help. Feelings of anger, loss and discouragement don't last long.
- _____ I feel self-confident, appreciate myself, and have a healthy concept of who I am.
- _____ I'm curious. I ask questions. I want to know how things work. I like to try new ways of doing things.
- _____ I learn valuable lessons from my experiences and from the experiences of others.
- _____ I'm good at solving problems. I can use analytical logic, be creative, or use practical common sense.
- _____ I'm good at making things work well. I'm often asked to lead groups and projects.
- _____ I'm very flexible. I feel comfortable with my paradoxical complexity. I'm optimistic and pessimistic, trusting and cautious, unselfish and selfish, and so forth.
- _____ I'm always myself, but I've noticed that I'm different in different situations.
- _____ I prefer to work without a written job description. I'm more effective when I'm free to do what I think is best in each situation.
- _____ I "read" people well and trust my intuition.
- _____ I'm a good listener. I have good empathy skills.
- _____ I'm non-judgmental about others and adapt to people's different personality styles.
- _____ I'm very durable. I hold up well during tough times. I have an independent spirit underneath my cooperative way of working with others.
- _____ I've been made stronger and better by difficult experiences.
- _____ I've converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences.

_____ **Total**

Resiliency Quiz Scoring*

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Low score: A self-rating score under 50 indicates that life is a probably a struggle for you and you know it. You may not handle pressure well. You don't learn anything useful from bad experiences. You feel hurt when people criticize you. You may sometimes feel helpless and without hope.

If these statements fit you, ask yourself, "Would I like to learn how to handle my difficulties better?" If your answer is "yes," then a good way to start is to meet with others who are working to develop their resiliency skills. Let them coach, encourage, and guide you. Another way, if you work for a large employer, is to get resiliency coaching from a counselor with the Employee Assistance Program. The fact that you feel motivated to be more resilient is a positive sign.

High score: If you rated yourself high on most of these statements, you have a score over 90. This means you know you're already very good at bouncing back from life's setbacks. For you, this book will validate many things you are doing right. And, because you like learning new ways to be even better, it will show you how to take your already good skills to a very high level—something like reaching an advanced-degree black-belt level in the martial arts.

A question for you to consider is how much you feel willing to tell your story to others and make yourself available to people who are trying to cope with adversities. People learn from real-life role models. You could be one.

Middle scores: If you agreed with many of the statements and scored in the 70–89 range, then that is very good! It means you will gain a lot from this book and will become even more self confident and resilient than before. You will become better and better at bouncing back from adversities.

If you scored in the 50–69 range, you appear to be fairly adequate, but you may be underrating yourself. A much larger percentage of people underrate themselves than overrate themselves on the assessment. Some people have a habit of being modest and automatically give themselves a 3 on every item for a total score of 60. If your score is in the 50–69 range, we need to find out how valid your self-rating is.

One validity check is to ask two people who know you well to rate you on the items and see what scores they come up with. Have a discussion with them about each of the items where there is a discrepancy and listen to what they say. If they rate you higher, this may indicate that you had a "good child" upbringing that is keeping you from being as resilient as you could be.

A second way of checking the validity of your self-rating is to answer these bonus point questions:

- Has your sense of humor ever gotten you into trouble?
- Has asking questions ever gotten you into trouble?
- Has being unpredictable or too complex ever puzzled or bothered others?
- Has your effort to anticipate problems ever had someone accuse you of having a negative attitude?
- Are you such a good listener your ability to understand both sides of a conflict has confused others?

Give yourself a point for every “yes” to the bonus point questions above, plus an additional bonus point for the item in the quiz regarding self-confidence and self-esteem. These extra questions help show that you may not see the connection between some of what you do and resiliency. The chapters and activities ahead will reveal more resiliency abilities in you than you ever thought were possible. The next chapter shows how adversity brought out strengths in people who didn’t know how resilient they could be.

* Reprinted with permission from Chapter 2 in *THE RESILIENCY ADVANTAGE: Master Change, Thrive Under Pressure, and Bounce Back from Setbacks*, by Al Siebert, PhD. Berrett-Koehler, 2005.

Dr. Al Siebert is internationally recognized for his research into the inner nature of highly resilient survivors.

His book *The Survivor Personality* is in its 16th printing and is published in six languages. He is an ex-paratrooper, was a volunteer rap group leader with Vietnam veterans for three years, and gives talks about “Resiliency Challenges of First Responders” at National Guard trainings. He conducted community resiliency workshops in north Loudoun County after the 9/11 attack, and is an advisor to the World Trade Center 9/11 Survivors Network.

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Al Siebert, PhD

Building Your Resiliency

(*From: Siebert, AI (2005). The Resiliency Advantage. Master Change, Thrive Under Pressure, and Bounce Back from Setbacks. CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers)

Nurture your health & well-being:

Key points to remember include the following:

- Events are neutral, they are **neither** stressful **nor** non-stressful. It is our internal response to events that can induce a stress reaction.
- We have the ability to determine our internal response.
- People who are resilient manage their internal responses by taking care of their mental /spiritual, physical, emotional health, even during times of crisis!

Fundamentals to nurturing your health and well-being include:

- Include physical activity
- Maintain routines
- Get enough sleep
- Eat a balance diet
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs

Additional strategies to nurture your health and well-being include:

- Focus on the things that you can control.
- Increase your positive experiences by doing more of the things that energize you or that bring you joy.
- Decrease your negative experiences by managing your exposure to negative people/situations.
- Use your sense of humor.
- Maintain relationships and ask for the support you need from others.
 - Help me problem solve, just listen to me vent, tell me what you would do in this situation.

Take an Active Approach to Solve Problems

1. **Define the “real” problem based on what you can control.** You can’t find a solution until you identify the problem and you can’t change the things that are not within your control to change.
2. **Identify the outcome you’d like and generate options to reach this outcome.** Think of this step like you would think of a road map. If you begin a journey without a destination in mind you will wander aimlessly. If you determine your destination before you leave then you can determine the best way to get there. This step also helps us to focus on the things we can control.
3. Just like when we are planning a road trip there may be more than one way to achieve the outcome we’d like. **Select the option that seems the best and then act to make it happen.** This step sounds deceptively simple but generating ideas is often where many people stop. Taking action requires energy and involves some risk but is the only way to reach the desired outcome of resiliency. **Things will not change unless we change something!**
4. The final, and perhaps most important, step to problem solving is to **evaluate the action you’ve chosen and determine if it is moving you toward your goal.** If it is not then you must **reassess your plan** and either change the options you selected or change your desired outcome.

Foster a Strong Sense of “Self”

Enhance your **self-confidence** by:

- Making a list of your accomplishments and telling others about them
- Spending time with other self-confident people
- Setting a “stretch goal”

Enhance your **self-esteem** by:

- Making a list of your accomplishments and praising yourself!
- When you are given a compliment respond with a simple “thank you” and enjoy the feeling

Enhance your **self-concept** by:

- Thinking of yourself in terms of your internal qualities rather than roles or titles; what makes you who you are?

Continue to Learn

Resiliency is about **adapting to changing situations**. Being **curious and asking questions** about our environment help prepare us to process the disruptive change that difficult situations can bring.

You can enhance your resiliency by being an active participant in the world around you. When things don’t go as you planned rather than dwelling on how things went wrong, use this as an opportunity to learn from that experience. *Ask yourself, “What have you gained that will help me the next time I face similar circumstance?”*

We can also learn valuable lessons by **observing others**. Think about someone you consider successful. What do they do when faced with difficult situations? What can you learn from them about what to do and what to avoid?

Monitor yourself by **listening to the feedback** of others, both the positive and the negative feedback. Resilient people understand that negative feedback is necessary for personal growth. The next time you are given feedback about something take some time to really think about it and decide if you need to make change. Ask yourself, “what parts of this statement are true”, “what can I learn from this feedback”, or “how can I use this feedback to enhance my life”.

Maintain an Adaptable Outlook or “Go with the flow”.

You can do this by:

- Approaching challenging times as learning opportunities
- Identifying strategies that you used to negotiate past challenging situations
- During challenging times asking yourself:
 - What strengths/talents do I have to utilize in this situation?
 - How can I turn this to my advantage?
 - What unusual opportunity has this created?
 - What can I learn from this experience?
- Having reasonable expectations

Do you expect life to always go as you want it to go?

The airplane to leave on time

The recognition you think you have earned

Do you expect things to stay the same and never change?

Your job description or reporting hierarchy

Your relationships

What unrealistic expectations do you have?

References and Additional Resources

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The Resiliency Center: <http://www.resiliencycenter.com/>